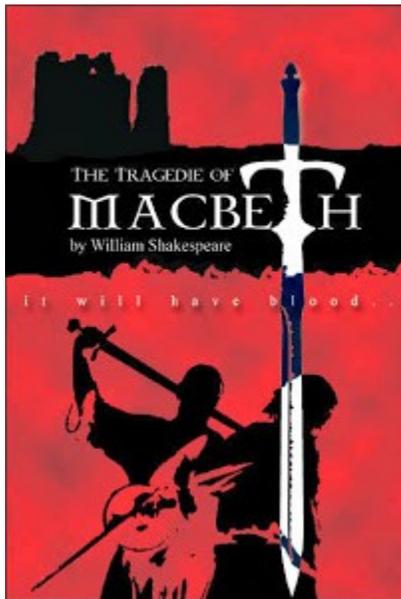


Macbeth

Great help for ISC class XI , XII students in English(i.e. Macbeth). Notes in easy and simple language..



Macbeth – An Overview

Macbeth is a story woven around a man's ambition and the repercussions of it. A brave and respected general, Macbeth wins a war against Norwegian and Irish allied forces that was led by the traitorous Macdonwald. When Macbeth returns to Scotland with his friend general Banquo, they meet three witches who prophesy that Macbeth will be the king and Banquo's descendants will be kings. Macbeth starts to think over the prophecies and is disturbed in to a great extent. The prophecies could be his own feelings rather than witches' prophecies as we

too have seen instances where generals becoming kings or trying to become kings in the recent history.

With the pressure of the prophecies becoming too much to bear alone, he writes to Lady Macbeth about them while going to see the King of Scotland, King Duncan. Lady Macbeth, a vicious childless woman, put venom into the prophecies and plans to kill the ageing king and make Macbeth the King. Macbeth, being a kinder person, hesitates to kill the king after the latter pays a visit to the former's castle but Lady Macbeth induces him not to lose the opportunity. With much uncertainty and hesitation, Macbeth kills King Duncan and his chamber guards and put the responsibility of the murder on the guards.

Macduff, the King's loyal Thane of Fife suspects Macbeth but doesn't show it. Duncan's sons Malcolm and Donalbin flee to England and Ireland for fear of death as whoever killed the king could murder his sons as well. But Macbeth takes this as an opportunity to become the king as there is no heir to the throne. He also puts the blame of killing the king on his own sons.

Though Macbeth becomes the king as he aspires, he is still suspicious of Banquo, the general, as the prophecies mentioned that his sons will be kings. So, he invites Banquo and his son Fleance to a dinner and in the meantime hires two murderers to kill the father and the son. Banquo gets killed but his son flees the scene. Even though Banquo was killed his ghost haunts Macbeth's castle and Macbeth is greatly disturbed.

Macduff also flees to England. Macbeth orders Macduff's castle be seized and sends murderers to slaughter Macduff's wife and children. Lady Macduff and her young son are murdered cold-bloodedly.

Meanwhile Lady Macbeth, who was the mastermind of the plot to kill the king becomes mad and sleepwalks at night. She feels the gravity of the crimes she was involved in and kills herself.

Kings sons and Macduff get together and raise armies and invade Macbeth's castle and defeats Macbeth's army and kill him.

(Malcom, the son of murdered king Duncan becomes the king. Although Malcolm, and not Fleance, is placed on the throne, the witches' prophecy concerning Banquo ("Thou shalt get kings") was known to the audience of Shakespeare's time to be true: James VI of Scotland (later also James I of England) was supposedly a descendant of Banquo.

In the backstage world of theatre, some believe that the play is cursed, and will not mention its title aloud, referring to it instead as "the Scottish play".

Actwise Summary Of Macbeth

Act I:

This Act opens with the three Weird Sisters setting up the entire theme of the play: Fair is foul and foul is fair. A war is taking place against Scotland (the setting of this play) and Norway. Scotland is victorious due to the valiant efforts of Macbeth. The traitorous Thane of Cawdor is captured and executed. King Duncan decides to reward Macbeth with the title of Thane of Cawdor to show his gratitude.

The scene shifts to the battleground where the three Weird Sisters confront Macbeth and Banquo, telling Macbeth that he will become Thane of Cawdor and eventually king. Macbeth soon learns of his new title, fulfilling the first part of the prophesy, and sends word to his wife. King Duncan plans on staying the night at Macbeth's home.

Lady Macbeth receives the news and immediately plots the death of King Duncan so her husband will be king. Lady Macbeth manipulates Macbeth into following her plans, and he reluctantly agrees to murder Duncan. By the end of Act I, Macbeth is determined to follow through with the plan.

Act II:

Macbeth again has some doubts (and visions), but he soon talks himself into following through with the murder. Macbeth freaks out so Lady Macbeth finishes the rest of the plan by wiping blood on the drunk guards.

The next morning, Macduff and Lennox arrive at Macbeth's, and Macduff discovers the dead body of King Duncan. All are shocked and Macbeth plays his role to perfection. The guards are immediately suspect and Macbeth kills them "in a fit of sorrow and rage." Malcolm and Donalbain, the King's sons, flee the castle because they are afraid that they will be blamed for the murder of their father. The king is soon buried.

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